

## 4 Factors Contributing to Project Success

Regardless of the type of project conducted, EJP2 grantees repeatedly identified common factors contributing to their success during interviews. These strategies cross-cut the different types. Common “success factors” included:

### 1) The grantee thoroughly researched and understood its target audience.

Researching and understanding the target audience and the community helped grantees tailor their programs to community needs. Specifically, understanding a community’s history with environmental justice, learning the most effective means of communication for that community, and gaining the community’s confidence were vital to successful projects. While grantees such as the **Town of Meeker** achieved success by learning about the target audience, other grantees had to make changes to their projects midstream as a result of not understanding their audience. One grantee, for example, had planned to translate fact sheets into Cambodian, only to find that most adults in the community could speak but not read the language.

Grantees also stressed talking to community members to learn the local history. Finding out what efforts community members made to improve the local environment in the past, and if there was a history of joining together against pollution and other community problems, helped grantees assess their situation. One EJP2 grantee, for example, found that competing interests among the different environmental justice groups in the community impeded progress.

### 2) The grantee involved community stakeholders up front.

Many successful grantees attributed their positive results to obtaining buy-in from community leaders and other key project partners before getting started on their grant projects. The input and recommendations from the community leaders helped grantees to structure successful projects. **Metropolitan Energy Center**, for example, credits its community visioning process as a key element of its success. Grantees also noted the importance of including all the key stakeholders and partners that will affect the project’s success. One grantee, for example, worked hard to develop a watershed protection module for the local science curriculum, only to find that the science curriculum was quite full. The grantee determined that the course would have yielded better and more permanent results had it been designed as an elective course rather than part of an already full curriculum. Earlier teacher involvement might have helped prevent this problem.

The timing of obtaining input from community members and key stakeholders, however, can be difficult for some grantees. Before approaching communities to obtain community buy-in, project planners want to be sure that they have funding for the activity. At this point, however, they do not know for sure if they would receive funding through EJP2 or other sources. Some organizations found that discussing project goals and promising changes to community members resulted in disappointment and reduced their credibility if they did not receive funding for the project. Waiting to involve the community until the organization received approval from EPA, however, resulted in less-informed project plans.

### 3) The grantee built on existing relationships and partnerships that had already earned the community's trust.

Grantees cited partnering with organizations, such as trade associations that already have the trust of business communities, as another key to successfully working with groups that mistrust outsiders. **Ecology Action**, for example, worked with the Korean Community Center of the East Bay (KCCEB) to develop two 4-hour workshops for Korean dry cleaners in Northern California. Reaching the Korean-American community is especially important when trying to reach dry cleaners; Korean Americans make up approximately 60 percent of all dry cleaners in California. Furthermore, this community often mistrusts regulatory agencies and environmental organizations, according to Ecology Action. Without assistance from the Korean Dry Cleaners Association of Northern California (KDA) and KCCEB, Ecology Action believes that it would not have been able to gain the trust of Korean-American dry cleaners. When communicating with dry cleaners, Ecology Action had more success when callers stated they were phoning on behalf of KDA than when identifying themselves as an environmental organization only.

Not only do partnerships with trade associations help build trust, grantees said that they also help provide access to the target audience. **Dunbar Association**, for example, partnered with the Pan-African Business Association (PABA) to reach small businesses in Syracuse, New York. Using PABA's mailing list, Dunbar sent brochures to businesses explaining the pollution prevention program and advertised in PABA's community center newsletter. Through this effort, Dunbar reached 60 businesses and conducted onsite visits. It is important to note, however, that given the transient nature of small businesses in low-income communities, there were still a significant number of businesses that were not members of trade associations. To reach these businesses, Dunbar conducted onsite visits to discuss pollution prevention methods in person.

**Roxbury Community College**, in association with the **Tellus Institute**, found partnerships with trade associations very valuable in their work as well. Roxbury/Tellus held their workshops with sponsorship from the Massachusetts Auto Body Association, the Massachusetts Fabricare Association, and the Massachusetts Printers Association. The grantees found it especially difficult to recruit businesses that were not members of these associations.

### 4) The grantee combined its activities with existing community events and festivals.

Whether planning a workshop for small businesses or a community meeting, planning activities in coordination with existing events helped grantees to attract participants. Most grantees that planned stand-alone meetings, events, and workshops found few attendees. Grantees found that combining their events with other regularly scheduled meetings or events helped improve attendance. The **City of Boston's Office of Environmental Health**, for example, used this approach to improve attendance at workshops held in conjunction with its new video on auto repair pollution prevention. Similarly, **Miami-Dade County** found that bringing workshops to industrial parks worked better than asking the small businesses to come to the grantee. The **Metropolitan Energy Center** found the same was true for its community meetings.